

December 16, 1957

Dr. Bernard D. Davis  
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Dear Bernie:

I was deeply moved by your letter of December 10, enough that I could not easily formulate this reply. But I am afraid that simple common sense gives the answer, that I really just can't take on one more obligation -- a poor expression, this one would be a privilege -- during the coming semester. I won't bore you by reciting what I do have to cope with, or with what else I haven't been able to, but I did leave a fair backlog of unfinished business with my trip, and it will be catching up with me during the next term. I would have been honored to be the first lecturer in the Mueller memorial series, and already am by your invitation. So please ask me again at a more propitious time. In any case, I owe Harvard a visit, for my own benefit, and the more so now you're set up there -- I hope as happily as your anticipation.

Australia was pleasant, not especially exciting overall, both lab- and touristwise, and altogether it was a good trip. I spent eight weeks in Melbourne, in Margaret's lab, and learned a great deal from this, first on the handling of flu virus for genetic study, and then some groundwork on the characterization of antibody liberated by single cells. I've just been talking to Albert Coons about this, and he can transmit any more about that you'd care to know.

We came back via India and Italy, which, starting from Perth in Western Australia, was not so much longer. We visited in Calcutta with the Haldanes, and in Bombay (where we met Kalekar on his way back from Tokyo!) with Gopal-Ayengar. No other stopovers but a day in Rome, an exciting tour under Sermentti's wing, and a few days in Milan with Cavalli. We're hopeful he may come for another several weeks' visit in Madison this spring for some intensive collaboration, another reason (not to mention Gatlinburg and our own symposium) to be shy of any more travelling not already spoken for.

I don't have much more to tell you about lab results. We're hunting for more auxotrophs involved in wall formation -- so far the clear out ones all seen DAP. But Jack Strominger visited here yesterday and we cooked up some new possibilities.

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Chargaff's paper in Nature (Oct. 26) left me somewhat perplexed. How could he publish such an unconvincing story? Is 26-26 the only mutant you gave him, or did he choose it just because it is already lousy with reversions?

With all the best,

Yours sincerely,

Joshua Lederberg  
Professor of Medical Genetics

JL/ev

P. S. Your first instincts about antipodes were probably better (cf. Fowler).